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Agenda item 104

PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1992-1993

Construction of additional conference facilities at Addis Ababa and Bangkok

Third report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the annual progress report of the Secretary-General on the status of the two construction projects at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) at Addis Ababa and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) at Bangkok (A/C.5/47/11). During its consideration of that report, the Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General who provided additional information.

2. As recalled in paragraph 10 of the Secretary-General's report, the construction contract provides for an extension equal to any force majeure period, plus whatever additional period is required for normal operations to resume under specific circumstances, as well as compensation for expenses of permanent staff and equipment idled during the force majeure period. The Advisory Committee notes that the contractor submitted a claim on 28 April 1992 for ECU 7,680 per day for such expenses, which would amount to ECU 437,760 for 57 days (approximately $600,000 at current rates). The Committee also notes that this claim is currently being reviewed.

3. The Advisory Committee was informed that, in addition to the above-mentioned claim, the contractor submitted a second claim, which amounts to ECU 10,496,143 (approximately $14 million). The contractor also requested 244 days of extension of time for completion. It was the view of representatives of the Secretary-General that the second claim, which represents 20 per cent of the base contract amount of ECU 52,655,450, is very high. The Advisory Committee shares this view and notes with concern the high

level of claims received from the contractor, as compared to the progress of work. In this connection, the Committee trusts that any settlement regarding these claims would be absorbed within the present project budget and, as stated by the Secretary-General in paragraph 14 of his report, there would be no need to revise the total estimated project cost.

4. The Advisory Committee requests that it be provided with a progress report on the ECA project at its spring 1993 session. In addition to including information covering the project's timetable and the status of work, the report should include developments regarding the negotiation of the contractor's claims and the ways and means of ensuring that the overall costs are kept within the approved budget.

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PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1992-1993

Administrative arrangements for the secretariat of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation

Fourth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 46/185 C, section XI, paragraph 3, requested the Secretary-General to study the possibility of alternative arrangements for the secretariat of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR), including its possible merger with the International Atomic Energy Agency, and to report to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/47/26) on the subject.

2. The Advisory Committee notes that UNSCEAR is served by a small secretariat, currently consisting of one Professional and two General Service staff members; a second Professional post has not been filled since 1980. For reasons mentioned in paragraph 4 of the report, documents for review by UNSCEAR are prepared mainly through consultants who are experts/scientists.

3. Pursuant to a decision taken by the General Assembly on 18 December 1973, the secretariat of UNSCEAR was transferred from New York to Vienna, with effect from 1 January 1974. The initial reason for the transfer to a European location was to establish links with the Geneva regional office of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and to assist in establishing environmental monitoring and assessment activities within UNEP by making available UNSCEAR experience. Instead of transferring the secretariat to Geneva, however, the General Assembly accepted the offer of accommodation made by the Government of Austria. Since 1979, with the establishment of the

United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV), administrative services for UNSCEAR have been assumed by UNOV.

4. With regard to the proposal for a possible merger of the UNSCEAR secretariat with IAEA, for reasons given in paragraphs 9 to 14 of the report, the Secretary-General recommends that the present organizational location and administrative support arrangements for the UNSCEAR secretariat be maintained.

5. The Committee points out, however, that the Secretary-General has only examined the possibility of a merger of the UNSCEAR secretariat with that of IAEA. The Advisory Committee therefore recommends that as requested in General Assembly resolution 46/185 C, section XI, paragraph 3, other possible alternatives for the organizational location and administrative support arrangements for the UNSCEAR secretariat be explored. Furthermore, the Committee questions the rationale with regard to its inclusion in section 17 (UNEP) of the programme budget, and believes that these matters should be examined and reviewed in the context of both the restructuring exercise within the United Nations Secretariat and the preparation of the 1994-1995 programme budget. The Committee also notes in this regard that the system-wide implications of this matter, including the use of related available expertise within the system, can be taken into account by the Secretary-General in his capacity as Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Coordination.

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PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1992-1993

Revised estimates resulting from resolutions and decisions of the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1992

Fifth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/47/21), in which he submits revised estimates attributable to resolutions and decisions adopted by the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1992. During its consideration of the above-mentioned report, the Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General who provided additional information.

2. The Advisory Committee notes in paragraph 2 of the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/47/21) that the total estimated requirements arising out of resolutions and decisions adopted by the Economic and Social Council amount to $2,158,900 for the biennium 1992-1993 and $5,132,800 for the biennium 1994-1995, totalling $7,291,700.

3. As shown in paragraph 3 of the Secretary-General's report, the total requirements cover both substantive ($3,183,700) and conference-servicing ($4,108,000) costs.

4. With regard to the conference-servicing costs, which were calculated on a full-cost basis for the biennium 1992-1993, ($1,244,200), the Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 4 of the Secretary-General's report that, since provisions have been made in the programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 not only for meetings already known at the time of the budget preparation, but also for meetings or extensions of such meetings that may be authorized subsequently, no additional resources would be required.

5. As pointed out in paragraph 5 of the report of the Secretary-General, the non-conference-servicing costs for the biennium 1992-1993, arising from the resolutions and decisions adopted by the Economic and Social Council, are estimated at $914,700. Of that amount, $572,200 relate to the full cost of preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace (Council decision 1992/272 of 30 July 1992), for which an appropriation of $522,200 has already been approved in the programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993. Consequently, net requirements would amount to $392,500.

6. For reasons stated in paragraphs 6 and 7 of the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/47/21), additional net requirements for activities derived from resolutions and decisions of the Economic and Social Council not provided for in the programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 and requiring use of the contingency fund are estimated at $292,500.

7. As pointed out in paragraph 8 of the report of the Secretary-General, a total appropriation of $292,500 would therefore be required under sections 21 (Social development and humanitarian affairs), 23 (Economic Commission for Africa), 24 (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific), 26 (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean), 27 (Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia) and 28 (Human rights) of the programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993. Further details are provided in paragraphs 9 to 28 of the Secretary-General's report by resolution and relevant budget section.

8. A review of alternatives in the event that these estimates would exceed the balance available in the contingency fund is contained in paragraphs 29 to 31 of the Secretary-General's report. The Advisory Committee was informed that the above information was communicated to the legislative bodies concerned. The Advisory Committee was also informed that, as at 4 November 1992, the remaining available balance in the contingency fund is $15,237,100.

9. The Advisory Committee has no objection to the Secretary-General's estimate of additional requirements in 1992-1993, totalling $292,500, attributable to Economic and Social Council resolutions 1992/17 and 1992/18 of 30 July 1992 and Council decisions 1992/259 of 20 July 1992 and 1992/271 and 1992/272 of 30 July 1992. Accordingly, the Committee recommends that, at this stage, the Fifth Committee should take note of the above estimate on the understanding that such additional appropriations as may be requested by the Secretary-General will be submitted in the context of a consolidated statement to the General Assembly towards the end of its forty-seventh session, in accordance with Assembly resolution 42/211 of 21 December 1987, annex, section C, paragraphs 5 and 6.

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PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1992-1993

Standards of accommodation for air travel

Sixth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on standards of accommodation for air travel (A/C.5/47/17).

2. The report, which covers the period from 1 July 1991 to 30 June 1992, has been submitted pursuant to General Assembly decisions 44/442 of 21 December 1989 and 46/450 of 20 December 1991, requesting the Secretary-General to continue to submit to the Assembly annual reports on standards of accommodation for air travel. The report also includes information on all expenditures by the United Nations for first-class travel and on the meetings attended by eminent persons for whom exceptions have been made for first-class air travel, as requested by the Assembly in its decision 40/455 of 18 December 1985 and section XIII of its resolution 45/248 A of 21 December 1990.

3. As recalled in the report of the Secretary-General, the General Assembly, in its resolution 42/214 of 21 December 1987, authorized the Secretary-General to exercise his discretion in making exceptions to allow first-class travel on a case-by-case basis. In accordance with administrative instruction ST/AI/249/Rev.3, business-class travel may also, in certain circumstances, be authorized by the Secretary-General. During the period under review, that is, from 1 July 1991 to 30 June 1992, the Secretary-General authorized 112 cases of first-class travel and 55 cases of business-class travel as an exception to the standards of accommodation; the total additional costs incurred as a result of these exceptions amounted to $199,675, which compares to a figure of $106,600 for the previous reporting period.

4. Tables 2 and 3 of the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/47/17) summarize, by category of exception, the number of exceptions granted during the current and previous reporting periods, respectively; as noted in paragraph 10 of the report, "a significant increase in exceptions was attributable to the category 'eminent persons'". The total number of exceptions under this category in the previous reporting period was 34, at a cost of $34,093, while the number of such exceptions amounted to 78 during the current reporting period, at a cost of $91,071.

5. In the opinion of the Advisory Committee, the standards of accommodation, as set forth in General Assembly resolution 42/214, should be brought to the attention of all eminent persons whose travel will be financed by the Organization. In this connection, the Committee reiterates its previously expressed view that, while not opposed in principle to the granting of exceptions, it trusts that they will be granted carefully and selectively.

6. The Committee is also of the view that the Secretary-General's report would be enhanced if information were provided in respect of which source of funding (for example, regular budget, trust funds, United Nations Development Programme, and so on) has financed the additional cost attributable to the granting of exceptions to the prevailing standards of travel; it recommends that future reports include such information.